

Dear Committee Members,

Since 1949 my family has farmed in Northwest Connecticut. Today we milk 300 cows and farm 800 acres including a 150 acre managed woodlot. We understand the value and need for healthy soils to support our operation so we can supply healthy fresh milk to Connecticut families. Through the decades we have worked with various agencies, including the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Department of Agriculture and UCONN to understand and implement practices that take the long term view of sustainability. Today it has become ever more urgent to accelerate adoption of climate resilient programs.

We are fortunate that we do not have to create standards, that our partners mentioned above have established practices that can be measured and implemented in consistent and meaningful ways. The significant impediment is the cost to implement practices. This bill would fund our Department of Agriculture, that knows and understands Connecticut producers, to financially incent these practices. We could move in a much more nimble way to adopt a broad range of practices to maximize agriculture's contribution to climate change mitigation.

Agriculture is identical to every other business. If we do not constantly challenge ourselves to improve we quickly become obsolete. That includes broadening our producers to mirror who we are as citizens of Connecticut. Connecticut needs a good supply of young and diverse people to fill the shoes of an aging population that characterizes our producers, including me. This bill emphasizes this reality by building in preferences for where we need to be in addition to supporting the existing demographic of what we are. Forward thinking legislation like this is important to guarantee that the long view is the most secure view. The last few years has taught us that we have to support each other to have a strong talented local team of producers for our food and fiber security.

Please support SB 243.

Thank you,

Benjamin Freund